

Wang Yu-chi at Hualien Temple Promotion: Scenic Beauty needs to be Complemented by Sound Policy

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The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) held a promotion activity this evening (August 3) at Sheng'an Temple in Hualien County. MAC Minister Wang Yu-chi said that Hualien is an area of scenic beauty, but it also needs good policies to flourish. The normalization of cross-strait relations during President Ma Ying-jeou's administration has brought enormous benefits in tourism, from which Hualien has truly profited. The signing of the Cross-Strait Trade in Services Agreement is an important step in the sustainable development of Taiwan's economy.

The MAC has been holding promotion activities at temples in three consecutive weeks. Today's event was held at Sheng'an Temple in Ji'an Township, Hualien County. Minister Wang said that there were broad misconceptions in outside circles over whether or not the Trade in Services Agreement would permit Mainland laborers to work in Taiwan and over which industry sectors would be opened. In fact, the Agreement does not permit Mainland laborers to work in Taiwan, nor does it allow investment immigration or Mainland investment in Taiwan's taxi, printing or Chinese herbal medicine retail industries. A flood of incorrect information has stirred fears among the people unnecessarily.

Minister Wang indicated that the Trade in Services Agreement is not, as some people have claimed, unrelated to the lives of local people. For example, in the e-commerce sector, under the Agreement Taiwan secured the

most favorable conditions from the Mainland of any other country. Taiwanese companies will be able to set up e-commerce websites in Fujian as platforms through which they can sell Hualien specialty products, such as handicrafts and food, direct to the Mainland's 1.3 billion people, expanding business opportunities. Rather than waiting for Mainland tourists to visit Taiwan to purchase those high-quality Taiwanese products, companies can make these items widely available for instant purchase online through websites, expanding their presence in the Mainland market.

Minister Wang said that if Taiwan wants to tap the mainland market, it must also open itself up in line with the spirit of free trade. Although market opening will bring challenges, the quality of Taiwan's service industry is so good that there is no need to fear competition. For example, according to the latest statistics, since 2009, 16 Mainland investments in Taiwan's restaurant industry have been approved and 10 companies have made investments in this sector. However, only eight companies remain in business, showing that Taiwan's service industry stands out by comparison.

Minister Wang noted specifically that Hualien's Sheng'an Temple has developed many cultural and creative products in recent years. These items, such as Queen Mother dolls, key rings and "East Heart Lamps," have become popular among devotees and visitors alike. The highly creative methods used by temples in receiving devotees and pilgrims shows that Taiwan's soft power should not be underestimated. The signing of the Trade in Services Agreement aims to help Taiwanese people seize opportunities to make money and create local jobs. In the market-opening process, the government will maintain careful checks and effective controls, as well as establishing effective review mechanisms, so as to absolutely minimize any harmful impact on Taiwan's industry.